

Matthew Lane  
Vice Dean for Finance and Administration  
3600 Market St., Ste. 501, Philadelphia, PA 19104

February 25, 2019

Subject: Inappropriate Work Conditions in DRL

Dear Mr. Lane,

We are writing this letter to bring to your attention the general quality of the work conditions in David Rittenhouse Laboratory (DRL). We are a group of students, postdocs and faculty who have been facing these issues for the past few years. In addition to the problems related to insects, mice, and having unreasonable office temperatures throughout the year, we have had to deal with the multiple water leaks occurring in our offices every semester. In light of a recent massive water leak we have reached a tipping point which has forced us to write this letter explaining the situation in detail.

There have been 5 leaks from the same area in the last 18 months in room 4N11. Moreover, flooding in 3N1H, a SAIL classroom, as well as the library and several offices on the 3rd and 2nd floors has occurred as a consequence. Every time, some property in those rooms has been affected and sometimes water has formed puddles in the nearby rooms as well. Following the most recent leak, 10 graduate students have had to temporarily move out of their offices and it seems that they will have to relocate for about 2 weeks. During this major leakage, there was substantial property damage which includes wet electronics, books and furniture. Furthermore, several offices also had parts of the ceiling collapse, which constitutes a serious safety hazard. In order to show the gravity of the situation, we are attaching an email that details the damage caused by the latest leak. It's also important to consider that in just two weeks we'll have the graduate student visiting day. This is bound to leave a terrible impression in the eyes of students who will be considering Penn for their graduate studies, given that we cannot in good conscience avoid mentioning these issues to those prospective students.

We would also like to mention that the general condition of the building is far from ideal. The air conditioning does not work properly and is turned on even during the winter. Due to this, several students, postdocs, and professors have had to buy heaters to use in their offices in order to be able to work without coats on. On the other hand, some classrooms are too hot during the summer because the air conditioning does not work properly. Another issue is that in several offices there has been a consistent appearance of mice and cockroaches which has been occurring for more than six years. Additionally, the carpets and couches in the offices do not have yearly maintenance. Some of the couches even have mouse feces under the cushions. We believe that the cleaning staff does a great job, nevertheless, there does not seem to be a system in place to ensure these tasks are executed on a regular basis. Steps such as regular

cleaning and monitoring the temperature in each room can be implemented without incurring any significant costs.

We expect to have conveyed an idea of what the current work conditions in DRL are like, and how detrimental they are to our well-being. Additionally, we believe the wider community needs to be aware of the terrible working conditions at one of Penn's major buildings. Indeed, these conditions affect negatively the perception that current undergraduate students have of not just the Physics and Astronomy and the Math departments but the university at large.

We hope you will ensure that adequate steps are taken so that these regular problems are taken care of and our offices and classrooms can become more work friendly.

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